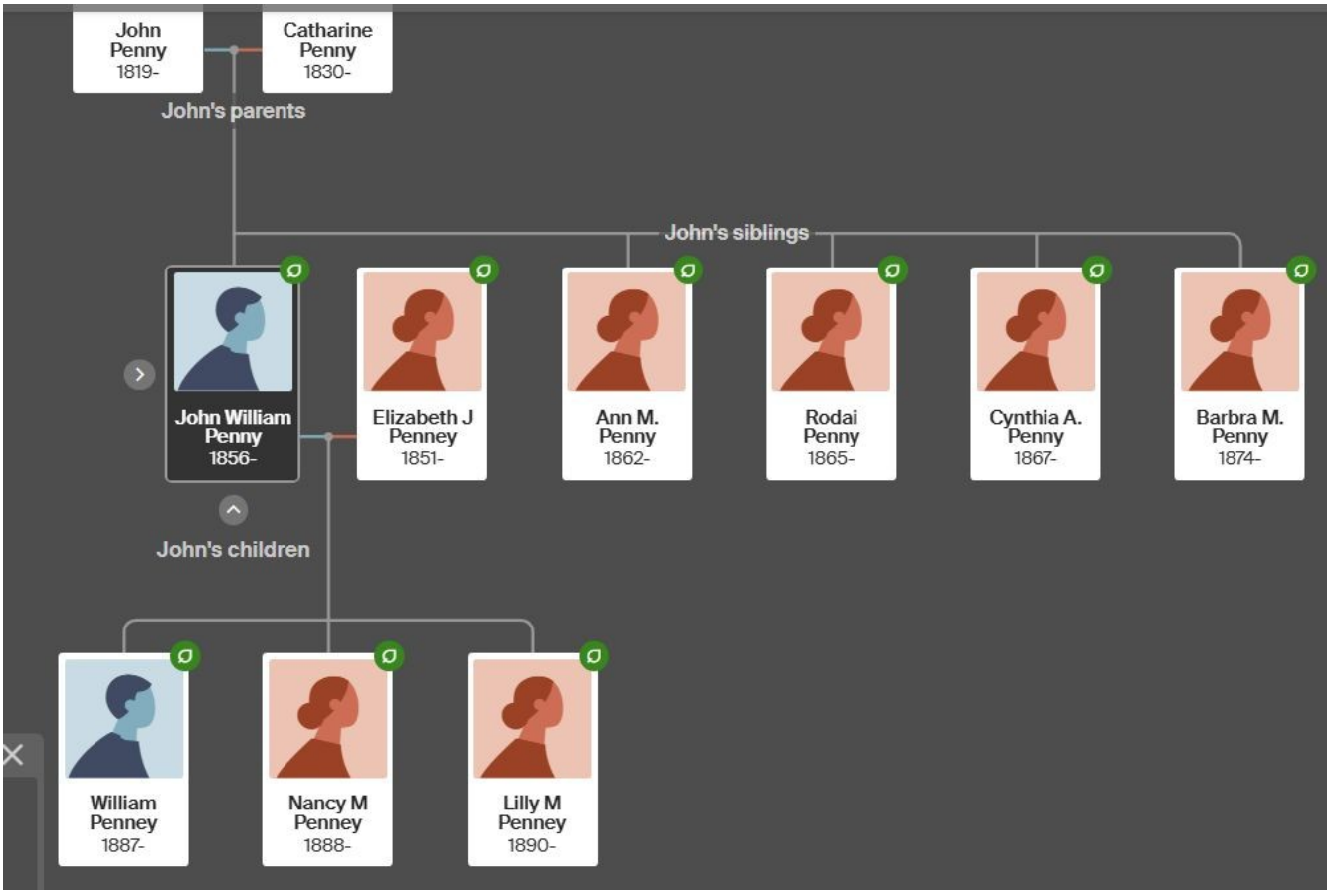
Research and results for Penny family in Livingston County, Illinois

Question:

I am doing genealogical study for my ancestor John William Penny. He lived in Livingston County at the time of his death. Online trees list (8 Feb 1889) as date of death, but no sourcing is included. He was last seen living in Owego in 1880 with wife living in Newtown, Livingston by the 1900 census. I am hoping to establish when he died and where his burial location is.

Answers:

Create Ancestry.com Family Tree



She must be looking for the John Perry born in 1819, not the John William Perry born in 1856?

See 1880 Census below:

Name	**John Penny**
Age	61
Birth Date	Abt 1819
Birthplace	Kentucky
Home in 1880	Owego, Livingston, Illinois, USA
Dwelling Number	165
Race	White
Gender	Male
Relation to Head of House	Self (Head)
Marital Status	Married
Spouse's Name	Catharine Penny
Father's Birthplace	Kentucky
Mother's Birthplace	Kentucky
Occupation	Farmer
Neighbors	View others on page

Household members

Name	Age
John Penny	61
Catharine Penny	50
John W. Penny	23
Ann M. Penny	18
Rodai Penny	15
Cynthia A. Penny	13

Anything in the Bloomington Pantagraph about the early Penny family?

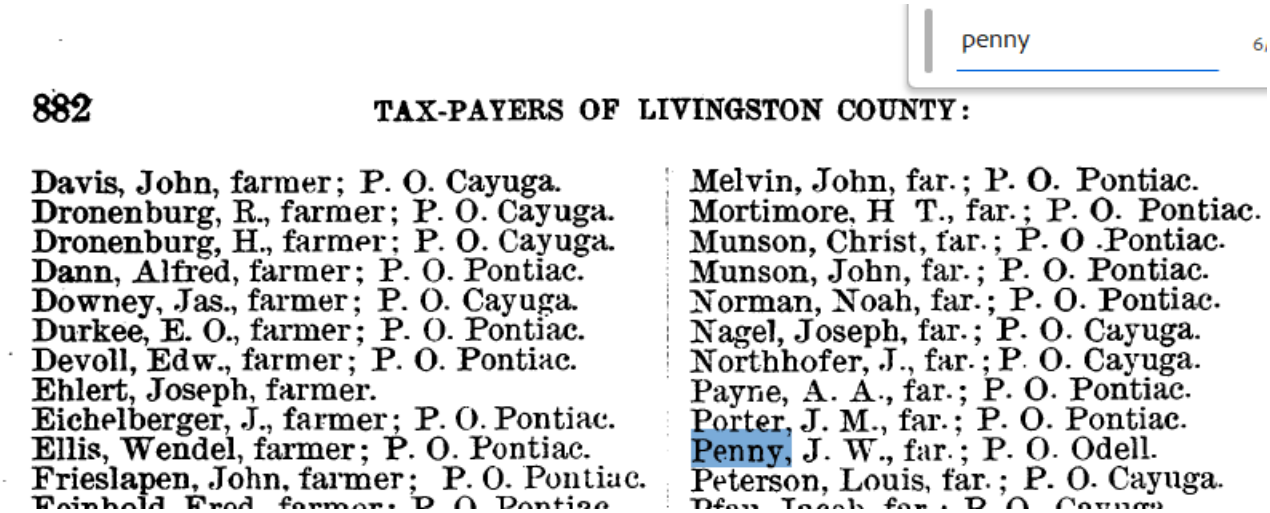
Searched for “John Penny”. There was a businessman in bloomington of that name that made brushes, but I don’t think it is the same guy. Otherwise no pertinent references.

Anything in the Sentinel or Pontiac Daily Leader?

No hits for “john penny” before 1935.

Anything in early Livingston County History books?

1878 history book……..there is a J. W. Penny listed as a farmer:


penny
882
TAX-PAYERS OF LIVINGSTON COUNTY:
Davis, John, farmer; P. O. Cayuga.
Dronenburg, R., farmer; P. O. Cayuga.
Dronenburg, H., farmer; P. O. Cayuga.
Dann, Alfred, farmer; P. O. Pontiac.
Downey, Jas., farmer; P. O. Cayuga.
Durkee, E. O., farmer; P. O. Pontiac.
Devoll, Edw., farmer; P. O. Pontiac.
Ehlert, Joseph, farmer.
Eichelberger, J., farmer; P. O. Pontiac.
Ellis, Wendel, farmer; P. O. Pontiac.
Frieslapen, John, farmer; P. O. Pontiac.
Melvin, John, far.; P. O. Pontiac.
Mortimore, H T., far.; P. O. Pontiac.
Munson, Christ, far.; P. O .Pontiac.
Munson, John, far.; P. O. Pontiac.
Norman, Noah, far.; P. O. Pontiac.
Nagel, Joseph, far.; P. O. Cayuga.
Northhofer, J., far.; P. O. Cayuga.
Payne, A. A., far.; P. O. Pontiac.
Porter, J. M., far.; P. O. Pontiac.
Penny, J. W., far.; P. O. Odell.
Peterson, Louis, far.; P. O. Cayuga.

1888 history book…….no hits on Penny.

1900 history book…….no hits for Penny.

1909 vol 2 history book……..no hits on Penny.

Any Land Purchases from Federal Government.

Most of the land in Livingston County was purchased from the federal government in the 1850s. I don't know what year the Penny family arrived, but I can check the free database.

https://glorecords.blm.gov/search/default.aspx

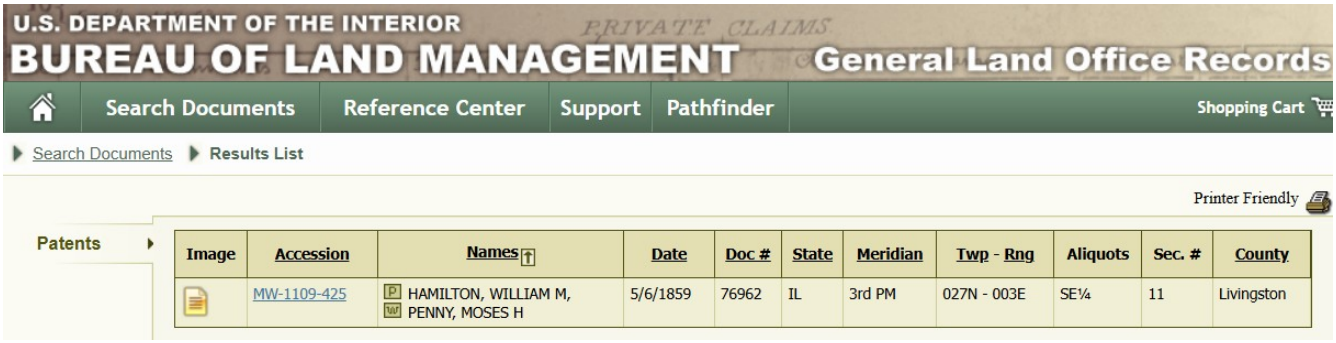


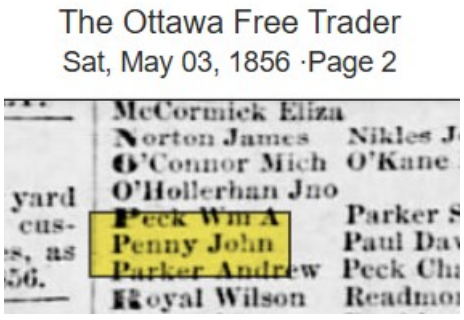
Image	Accession	Names	Date	Doc #	State	Meridian	Twp - Rng	Aliquots	Sec. #	County
	MW-1109-425	HAMILTON, WILLIAM M, PENNY, MOSES H	5/6/1859	76962	IL	3rd PM	027N - 003E	SE¼	11	Livingston

The only land purchase record involved a Moses H. Penny, but he was a war veteran who sold his free land rights to a Mr. Hamilton, so nothing here.

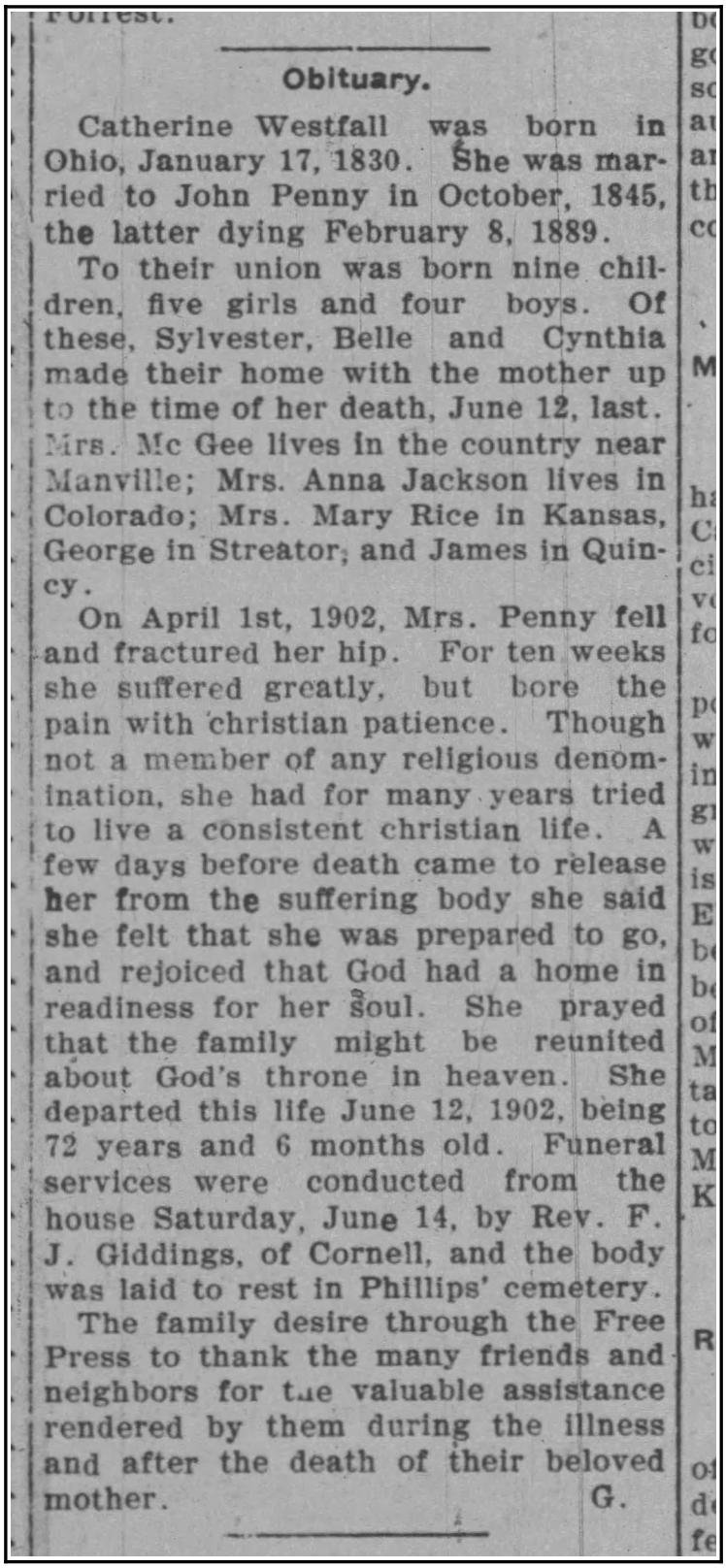
Newspapers.com

Search for "John Perry".

In the early days, the receiver, not the sender, had to pay postage for letters. May receivers chose not to pay and the newspapers would publish lists of letters waiting for the receiver to pay to receive it. This entry was for the Ottawa post office, and many people in Livingston County got their mail there until more nearby post offices were established.



Found obit for Mrs. John Perry in Streator Times, The Times
Streator, Illinois · Wednesday, June 25, 1902



Forrest.

Obituary.

Catherine Westfall was born in Ohio, January 17, 1830. She was married to John Penny in October, 1845, the latter dying February 8, 1889.

To their union was born nine children, five girls and four boys. Of these, Sylvester, Belle and Cynthia made their home with the mother up to the time of her death, June 12, last. Mrs. Mc Gee lives in the country near Manville; Mrs. Anna Jackson lives in Colorado; Mrs. Mary Rice in Kansas, George in Streator, and James in Quincy.

On April 1st, 1902, Mrs. Penny fell and fractured her hip. For ten weeks she suffered greatly, but bore the pain with christian patience. Though not a member of any religious denomination, she had for many years tried to live a consistent christian life. A few days before death came to release her from the suffering body she said she felt that she was prepared to go, and rejoiced that God had a home in readiness for her soul. She prayed that the family might be reunited about God's throne in heaven. She departed this life June 12, 1902, being 72 years and 6 months old. Funeral services were conducted from the house Saturday, June 14, by Rev. F. J. Giddings, of Cornell, and the body was laid to rest in Phillips' cemetery.

The family desire through the Free Press to thank the many friends and neighbors for the valuable assistance rendered by them during the illness and after the death of their beloved mother.

G.

So if the wife was buried in Phillips Cemetery, it is very likely she was buried by her husband.

Where is Phillips Cemetery? [in Newtown Township]

Catherine J. Penny

in the U.S., Find a Grave® Index, 1600s-Current

Want to get involved? Click here.

Report a problem

Saved to: Penny, Catharine in tree "John William Penny Family Tree" **Remove**

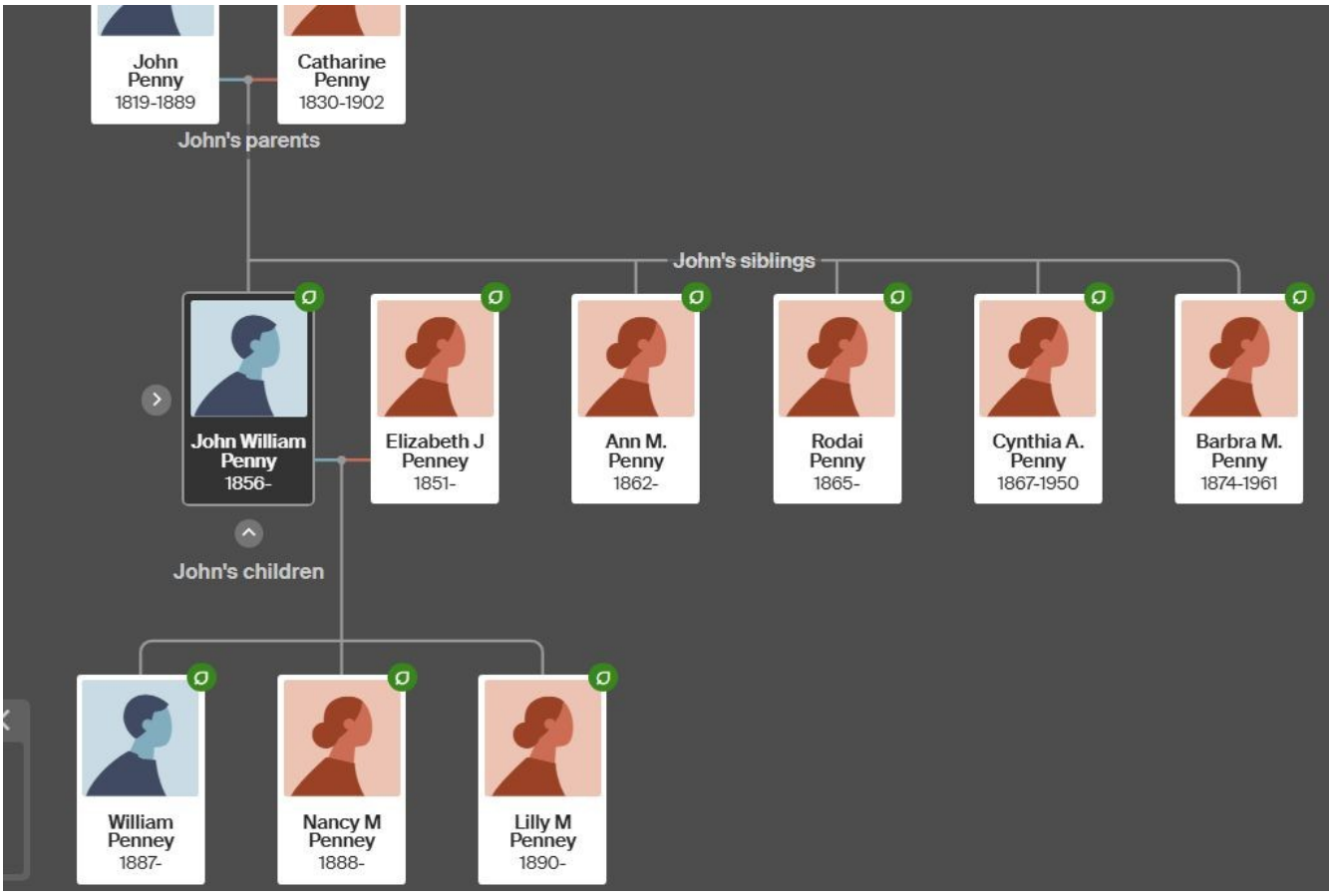
Detail Source

Name	Catherine J. Penny
Gender	Female
Birth Date	17 Jan 1830
Death Date	12 Jun 1902
Cemetery	Phillips Cemetery
Burial or Cremation Place	Newtown Township, Livingston County, Illinois, United States of America
Has Bio?	N
Children	John W. Penny Barbara May McGee Cynthia Ann Penny
URL	https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/155641466/catherine-j.-penny

There are 7 Penny family members buried in this cemetery per findagrave, not counting her husband.

No death notice for John Penny in February 1889 streator times.

Updated Family Tree with his 1889 death date



Conclusions:

1. The obit for Mrs. Penny above lists the death date of her husband as Feb 8, 1889. This is likely to be accurate, since close relatives usually help write the obit.
2. One could try to find the Sexton with the burial records for the Phillips Cemetery and confirm that John Penny is buried by his wife. I don't know how to go about this task.
3. If John Penny died in 1889, it is likely he was buried in a cemetery as opposed to be buried on the family farm. Many cemeteries were in existence by 1889. In the 1830s through 1850s, not many cemeteries existed, so people were often buried on the family farm.

Dale C. Maley
President – Livingston County Historical Society
August 10, 2025